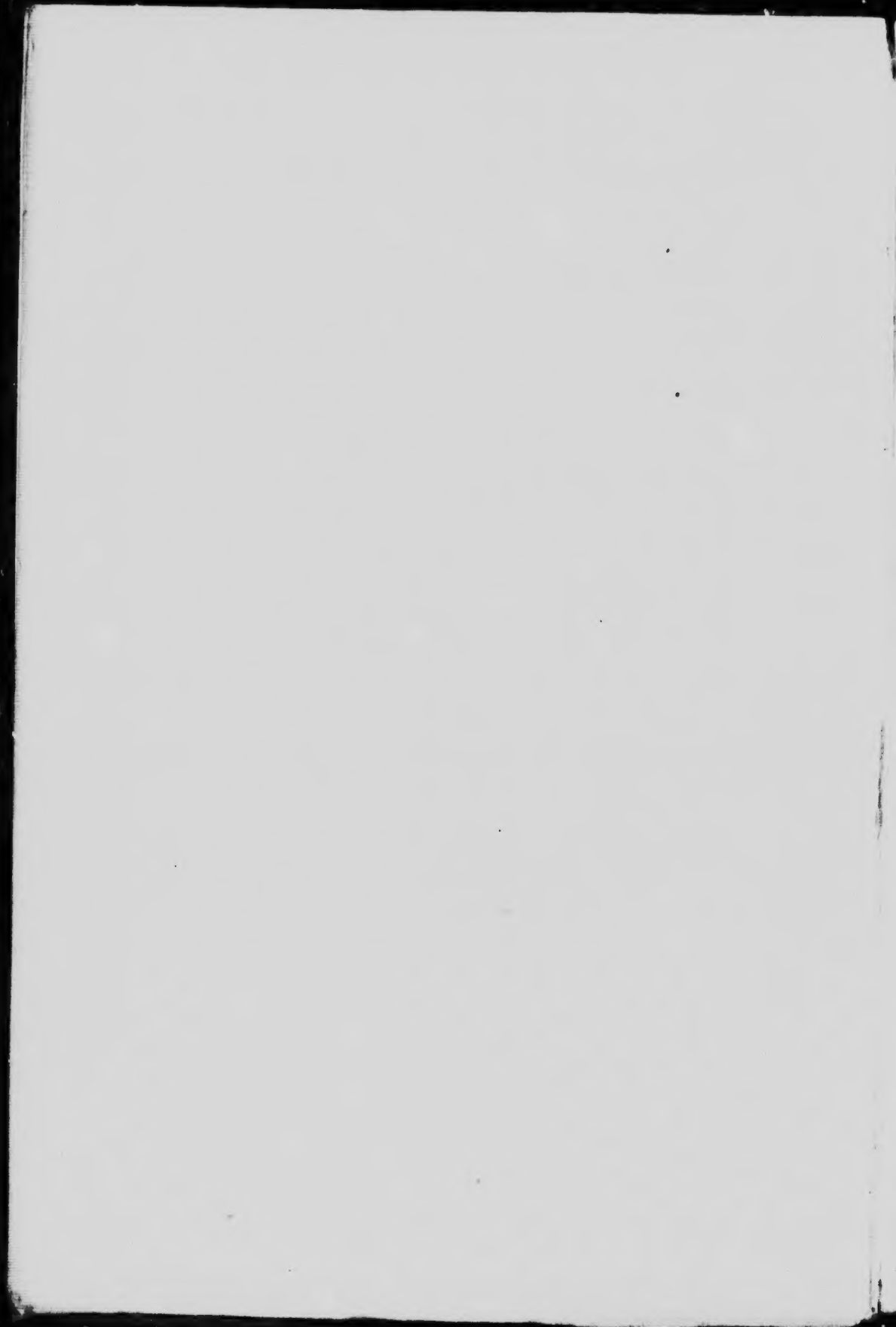




J. L. CROMMELIN BROWN

R. G. A.

DIES HEROICA

WAR POEMS : 1914-1918

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

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1791
To

W.D.G., J.C.B., and other young soldiers

DEDICATION

*WE have heard the bees and felt the sun grow hot on the
face together,*

*And watched the great clouds tumbling up across the Sussex
down ;*

*We found the same clouds farther north and the bees among the
heather,*

*Where the woods are old and silent and the pools are dark
and brown.*

*We've read and laughed and played, good Lord ! and talked
the slow sun under,*

*And heard the nightjars whirring and the rooks go home
to bed,*

*And watched the harvest moon come up, a white and shining
wonder,*

And all the bright star-companies go marching overhead.

*The sweetest hour of all sweet hours is the hour when, long
unbroken,*

A confusion and a silence fall that do not ask for speech ;

The finest word of all fine words is the word that stays unspoken,

But . . . with both a crystal thought no utterance can reach.

*God grant, dear lad, that once again we walk the moors together,
And greet the sun and feel the wind blow fresh on face and
lips,
Or stretch and dream upon the down in golden summer weather,
And watch our thoughts flock from us like the swift white
wings of ships.*

FOREWORD

THOSE of whom it can be said that they have 'served their own generation' have performed a task of the rarest difficulty and value. It is easy to catch the spirit of a time gone by and be a *Laudator temporis acti*. It is hardly less easy to dream dreams and see visions of the coming time, which may or may not be fulfilled. But to some it is given to hear with understanding the voices of their own day, and to a few it is also given to catch the time and rhythm of its music. This is the distinction which belongs to Mr. Crommelin Brown's poems. The War has stirred all hearts, and imagination is a dangerous gift for a soldier. But this author has taken with him to the battlefield the fine culture of his former days, and has set the wild music of the loud and roaring time to thoughts and emotions gathered from wider fields. All the tragedy is here, and he looks at it straight and with unflinching eyes. All the eternal childhood of the human heart is here also, and he expresses it in his own language. That combination of tragedy with childlikeness is the authentic

note of to-day, the most characteristic spirit of the hour. It has found its most perfect expression in the wonderful poetry of Rupert Brooke. In these poems of his Cambridge contemporary, it sounds clear and unmistakable.

JOHN KELMAN.

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RUPERT BROOKE

1887-1915

To have lived and loved—yea, even for a little,
To have known the sun and fulness of the earth ;
To have tested joy nor stayed to prove it brittle,
And travelled grief to find it end in mirth ;
To have loved the good in life, and followed,
groping,
Beauty that lives among the common things,
Awaiting, eager-eyed and strongly hoping,
The faint far beating of an angel's wings.

All these were his. And with his soul's releasing,
Dearest of all, immortal youth has crowned him,
And that bright spirit is young eternally ;
Dreaming, he hears the great winds blow unceasing,
And over him, about him, and around him,
The music and the thunder of the sea.

GRATIAS AGO

Thanksgiving

For work and youth and friendships worth the
prizing,
For health and hope and strivings after right,
For all ideals past our realising,
For books and music and the stars at night,
For all things honourable, all things pleasant,
The dream that lingers and the thought that
flees,
For past and future and the abiding present,
Come what come may, I render thanks for these.

No sweeter joy than that succeeding sorrow,
No kindlier sun than that which follows rain,
So, on some splendid bright far-reaching morrow,
The earth will smile and skies be blue again.
Meantime, though earth and skies alike are riven,
I thank the gods for all that they have given.

MORPHIA

I

SURELY this is most wonderful and strange.
Within the round of this white tiny thing
Are powers of life and powers of death which bring
So sudden and so merciful a change.
To all the gates of sleep I hold the key ;
Most subtly in the courses of the brain
This shall o'ermaster my o'ermastering pain,
And all-too-vivid sensibility.

So do I eat, and straightway draw the blind
Between the world's wrack and this struggling
soul,
Where wish and will maintain their endless
fight ;
And body's ache and weariness of mind
Lapse, and resolve, and sink beyond control
In negative and satisfying night.

MORPHIA

II

DIMLY above, as divers glimpse the light,
I eddy upwards towards a thing half-seen ;
Sways like sea-currents, fluidly and green,
The flood of consciousness across my sight ;
Till, one by one, the veils are stripped away ;
The smoke of slumber blows away like dust ;
And follows, sudden as a bayonet thrust,
The swift intolerable light of day.

So once again my faculties are hurled
Into the space of smell and sense and sounds . . .
Of feet that walk interminable rounds . . .
And voices muttering across the world . . .
A shapeless Face that peers and pries in vain.
O God ! O God ! Why did I wake again !

HOSPITAL, 1916.

SONNETS

I

I do not wish that I should scant my fill
Of love and grief and all life has to give ;
Lord, keep my mind awake, and let me live
Nervous and sensitive to good or ill.
Unaided let me labour out my task ;
With mine own shoulders bear my proper load ;
No sundered heavens, no Voice upon the road,
Like the Damascus call—none such I ask.

Yet when the time comes for my journeying
Into the cold and dark, let there be found
Some friendly face, some well-remembered sound,
A hand upon my arm, a kindly tone,
Some little unconsidered human thing,
So that I pass not utterly alone.

SONNETS

II

THEY talk and move about me as a show
Where all are adequate and none sincere,
And everything correct and nothing clear,
Studiously cloaking what is hid below.
Yet do I know that underneath there lies
A separate soul, a striving pulsing heart,
A spark of the eternal fires, a part
Of God Himself, that looks with mortal eyes.

O human thought beyond all human speech !
O human heart beneath the fashioned pose !
O human love that craves for the divine !
Would that my yearning deep desire could reach
The secret springs from which all being flows,
And touch and talk with that white soul of thine.

SONNETS

III

ABOUT our beings we create a fence
Built of conventions and hypocrisies ;
Faily we tell the customary lies
And move about our business of pretence.
And yet, within this hedge of deed and word,
Lies something great that yearns for loftier things,
A human soul inspired, a thrush that sings,
But, self-imprisoned, never can be heard.

Ah, tear it down, this veil that masks the light,
Show to the world the human thing you are !
Man makes you false, the gods have built
you true ;
Think, act, and speak the godlike truth in you,
That haply in the dark may shine a star
To guide a stumbling brother through the night.

THE MERMAID INN, RYE,
February 1918.

IN MONTAUBAN

QUIETLY now, when the rush and roar of battle is
over,
In the wreck of the ruined shell-swept street he
lies ;
The pangs of death have left no mark but the jaw
dropped open,
And patient half-shut eyes.

Sixty winters have laid their joys and sorrows upon
him,
The hair is silvered which once was brown and
thick,
And, near the hand which never shall grasp them
living,
Are placed a spade and pick.

Some old gardener, I fancy, who, back in his cottage
in England,
Read to his wife of a Sunday afternoon,
While the sun came through the blinds, and
flowers were fragrant,
And bees were loud in June.

Some old gardener, who, reading that hands were
wanted,
Strong and steady and cunning with pick and
spade,
Dropped his paper, and went, his tools on shoulder,
Forth to follow his trade.

So for a time he laboured and hoed and mended,
Stealing forth in the dusk when others sleep,
He and yeomen beside him, who work unknown,
unnoticed,
Making the trenches deep.

Then last night through the stars and silences,
sudden
A whistle and shattering crash like a thunder-roll,
And through the flying bricks, and the smoke, and
the dust, uprising
His startled kindly soul.

So, old friend, in the dawn you pass to a greater
sunrise,
Beyond the spite of men who mangle and slay ;
And God, Who loves all gardeners, will greet you
and bid you enter
His sunnier ampler Day.

Widely and deep I dig, disposing the tools beside
him,
Crossing the toil-worn hands and propping the
head,
And earth, whose fruits he honoured and worked
for living,
Rest on him lightly, dead.

THE ROAD TO YPRES

ALONG the road that leads to Ypres,
The road so straight and fair,
The poplar stands in serried rows,
And, like a marching army, goes
Eastward from Poperinghe Square
Along the road to Ypres.

The sunny road that leads to Ypres
Has borne a joyous freight ;
Wagons and carts and market-drays
Went clattering on their various ways
To town and village, fair and fête,
Along the road to Ypres.

But the long road that leads to Ypres
Sees now a sterner sight ;
In strange and midnight traffickings,
Shrapnel and shell and murderous things
Go lumbering through the starless night
Along the road to Ypres.

And the great road that leads to Ypres,
Remembers too with pride,

The night when those who strove so well
Fought for a space with fumes from hell,
Then staggered back, and, choking, died,
Along the road to Ypres.

Beside the road that leads to Ypres,
They found the long Road's end ;
The poplars whisper overhead,
And still they wait, those gallant dead,
To march a mile beside a friend
Along the road to Ypres.

Along the road that leads to Ypres,
So many fought and fell,
With every corps that swings along,
With every lad that lilts a song,
A phantom army walks as well
Along the road to Ypres.

Across the ruin that was Ypres
A tide of death has flowed,
Yet, wandering through the Flemish plains,
The road, the battered road, remains,
A haunted road, a splendid road,
The road that leads to Ypres.

THE CHARGE OF THE SCOTS GREYS

GREY and silver in the morning, see the bits and
bridles shine.

Grey and silver in the sunlight, they are trotting
into line ;

A dozen guns to silence and a mile of plain be-
tween,

As the 'terrible grey horses' cantered out across
the green.

Across the plain they galloped, through a blinding
searing hell,

And the Lord of battles only knows how any lived
to tell,

But they're through it, and they do it, and the
sabres in the sun

Flash and fall amid the smoke-wreaths, till at last
that work is done.

Grey and silver in the morning—ah, how gallantly
they wheel,

Wheel and form behind the batteries, a broken
gleam of steel ;

And a whisper and a clapping down the crowded
trenches runs,
As the shattered remnant canters through the
shattered German guns.
Their wounded and their dying can be reckoned
by the score,
And six of every ten of them will never gallop
more ;
But the guns are put to silence (with a mile of plain
between !)
And the riderless grey horses follow back across the
green.

And if there be a Paradise where gallant horses
go,
I think on phantom battle-fields they charge some
phantom foe.
When the gods are fighting o'er again their old
forgotten wars,
And Armageddon thunders through Valhalla's open
doors,
'Midst the lilting of the bugles down the blood-red
lists of Mars,
Through the clash of armies swaying on the
trampled fields of stars,

The souls of German gunners scatter, shrieking
down the wind,
With those 'terrible grey horses' drumming after
them behind.

I have to thank Mr. Will. Ogilvie for introducing me to the admirable metrical phrase round which this poem is written. He used it in a poem which appeared in the *Scotsman* during the first months of the war; it was Napoleon, I believe, who first alluded to the 'terrible grey horses' of the British cavalry.

THE BATTLE OF THE DOGGER BANK

24th January, 1915.

THE dawn was white above us, the sea before was
grey,
And the mist was lying round us over Queens-
ferry Bay,
The Sunday bells were ringing and the Sunday folk
were singing
When the wireless started speaking and the *Lion*
sailed away.
Four cruisers of the enemy reported out at sea,
And Edinburgh sitting there as quiet as could be,
But we hadn't time for sermons for the Fleet was
hunting Germans,
So we cleared our decks for action, and we hauled
our cables free.

Then silently and swiftly our destroyers take the
tide,
And speedily, how speedily, they fling the miles
aside,
And silent, swift, and steady, with their forward
turrets ready,
Inevitably after them the battle-cruisers glide.

The wind was breathing easy like a tired child at rest,
And the coast of England hanging like a shadow in the West,
When a wisp of smoke appearing started every sailor cheering,
And we saw the flagship signalling for battle line abreast.

Then the stokers stripped and sweated down with every ounce they 'd got,
And they scrapped the chairs for fuel just to gain an extra knot,
And the decks beneath were humming, and the screws behind us thrumming,
And the pulses in our ears were drumming loudest of the lot.
The Germans wheeled before us ere the sighting shots had scored,
And after them, and after them the battle-cruisers roared ;
For a hundred miles we chased them, till we finally out-paced them,
And we fought them to a finish for the glory of the Lord.

There are widows out in Germany who weep and
watch in vain
For twice five hundred sailors who will never sail
again,
And the sweethearts there are weeping for the men
beyond their keeping
Who are sleeping in the silence of the everlasting
main.
Then here 's a health to England and the flag that
flutters free,
And to every gallant fighter on whichever side he
be,
And when fleets engage together may they find
good fighting weather,
As we found it on the Sunday when the *Lion* put
to sea.

SUBMARINES

By paths unknown to Nelson's days
Our swift flotillas prowl below,
We go upon our various ways
Where Drake and Howard might not go ;
Unheard, intangible as air,
Unseen, yet seeing all things plain,
While ships and wide-eyed seamen stare,
We pass, and strike, and pass again.

No sun upon our wake is seen,
No night looks down upon our deeds,
But broken half-lights, strangely green,
Gleam tangled in the swaying weeds ;
Dim vistas loom before our eyes,
Vast shapes across our vision flee,
And round about our feet there lies
The twilit silence of the sea.

Beside our tracks, half-guessed at, dim,
The creatures of the ocean browse,
Yet none so dreadful, none so grim,
As those we carry in our bows.

The navies of forgotten Kings
Lie scattered on the ocean bed ;
We float among prodigious things,
We that are neither quick nor dead.

There, in their never-ending sleep,
The sailors of a bygone day
Dream of the land they died to keep,
A land more permanent than they ;
And we who have new ways of war,
Strange means of death beyond their ken
Oh, may we fight as fought before
Our fathers, who begat us men !

So, where the tides and tempest rust
The shattered argosies of Spain,
We praise the gods who now entrust
This England to our charge again ;
Then with thanksgiving, as is meet
From such as hold their lives in pawn,
We glimmer upwards till we greet
The grey relentless Channel Dawn.

THE *LUSITANIA*

In a world that is neither night nor day,
A quiet twilit land,
With fifty fathoms over you
And the surge of seas to cover you,
You rest on the kindly sand.

Dim fluctuant forms with goggle eyes
About you rise and fall,
And monstrous things take stock of you,
Mumble and mouth and mock at you,
But move you not at all.

Above, the earth is March or May,
And skies are fair in Spring.
But all the seasons are one with you,
Summer and winter are done with you,
And wars, and everything.

Surely this is a gift,
To sleep so sound and sure
That neither spite nor dreariness,
Passions nor pain nor weariness,
Can reach you any more.

Nor swift corruption comes, but slow
And imperceptibly
You 'll alter, not as others must,
To dead and unresponsive dust,
But into living sea.

Thus when your members are dissolved
You 'll move and live again,
And mix, and smoothly, blendingly,
Change and range unendingly
About the endless main.

In drifting spume and flying scud,
When the great tides shoreward sweep,
The seas, that are all in all to you,
Whisper and move and call to you,
Whisper and call and weep.

THE GERMAN DUG-OUT

Forty feet down
A room dug out of the clay,
Roofed and strutted and tiled complete ;
The floor still bears the mark of feet
(Feet that never will march again !),
The doorposts' edge is rubbed and black
(Shoulders that never will lift a pack
Stooping in through the wind and rain !),
Forty feet from the light of day,
Forty feet down.

A week ago
Sixteen men lived there,
Lived, and drank, and slept, and swore,
Smoked, and shivered, and cursed the war,
Wrote to their people at home maybe,
While the rafters shook to the thudding guns ;
Husbands, fathers, and only sons,
Sixteen fellows like you and me
Lived in that cavern twelve foot square
A week ago.

Into the dark
Did a cry ring out on the air,

Or died they stiffly and unafraid
In the crash and flame of the hand-grenade ?
We took the trench and its mounded dead,
And the tale of their end is buried deep,
A secret which sixteen corpses keep
With the sixteen souls which gasped and fled
Up forty steps of battered stair,
Into the dark.

Forty feet down,
Veiled from the decent sky,
The clay of them turns to its native clay,
And the stench is a blot in the face of day.
Men are a murderous breed, it seems,
And these, maybe, are quieter so ;
Their spirits have gone where such things go ;
Nor worms nor wars can trouble their dreams ;
And their sixteen twisted bodies lie
Forty feet down.

NO-MAN'S LAND

AFTER the long weeks, my son, we meet at last.
The times have gone above us both so fast—so
fast

That but an eyelid's fall would seem to span
The years that changed you from a boy to man . . .
You with the blossom-face, and eyes of wonder
Blue as the strange new skies you wandered
under,

All was so fresh to you—the world a toy—
Vivid, bewildering, delightful boy . . .
You with new knowledge and the heart of youth
For ever seeking the eternal Truth. . . .
Child—boy—man—all that my heart held dear—
All that was You—except the soul—lies here.

So strangely still ! And I to see your face
Must creep in darkness to this fateful place,
The dreadful midst, where but to raise a head
Will add another to the unburied dead,
Where noiselessly a dozen yards away
Nerve-shattered men await the dawning day,
And search, with fingers twitching on their
triggers,
For fancied forms and fear-created figures.

Ah, you are wise and quiet ! Saner far
Than these poor shaken desperate creatures are,
Or I, who crouch beneath the scudding sky
Ready to kill, or, failing that, to die,
Flattening myself like any hunted hare
Beneath the moonlight and the starshell's flare.
God ! has the world gone mad that men should
creep
To slay an unknown brother in his sleep !
This silent congregation is more wise
Than all live things which crawl beneath the skies.

Gropingly in the dark my fingers trace
Each feature of the well-remembered face . . .
The firm young mouth, straight nose, and boyish
brow,
The eyes whose wonderment is over now
(The night lies heavy on their dawning blue) ;
For the last time I run my fingers through
The fair young locks, sun-kissed and touched to
gold . . .
For the last time my fingers find and hold
Those strong young fingers, now so cold—so cold !

A week, my son, I sought the place you fell ;
Now I have found you. Greeting and farewell !

O God, whose Son was mangled on a tree,
By my poor mangled son I pray to Thee :
Let peace and pity ring this earth about,
Or send Thy thunderbolts and blot us out !

AN AFFAIR OF OUTPOSTS

*Throughout the heat of a July afternoon,
Bullet for bullet, they held the stricken field,
Four hundred rifles against a torn platoon
That swayed and tottered and fought, but would
not yield.*

Behind the trees he saw the sunset flame,
And turned and waited the end so long foreseen ;
'Sergeant, what of the fight ?' And the answer
came,
'Of sixty men we reckon a bare sixteen.'

Perhaps, at home, the School were watching a stand,
While the shadows lengthened and lay across the
grass,
And the two in the middle were playing a lonely
hand,
With the bowling keen, and a desperate hour to
pass.

'Twas difficult work whenever the sun got low ;
The last half-hour was ever the worst for light—
'Sergeant, Sergeant, how do the chances go ?'
But none replied save the rattle and roar of the
fight.

Shadow by shadow he watched the dusk begin
While the circle of fire crept nearer and yet
more near ;
In Norfolk now the duck would be coming in,
As he 'd seen them fighting homeward many a
year.

But never a duck from all that sunset fen,
And never a trick that the best of bowlers tried
Had warmed his heart as the blood was tingling
then,
'This is life, this is sport !' he cried, and,
smiling, died.

*Though armies perish and empires fall apart,
Though life be robbed of all life has to give,
The chivalry learnt in youth, the joyous heart,
These are abiding, these are the things that live.*

THE CHARGE

You who are sure where once ye saw not surely,
You who are strong who sometimes proved you
weak,
Who now are pure, yet might not have walked
purely,
Out of the battle-field to you I speak.

Yes, and a greater voice than mine is calling
Across the ruin of this blood-drenched plain,
Where, day by day, our English youth is falling,
And Christ is hourly crucified again.

Not to the perfect pilgrim is it given
To heal the griefs in which he had no share,
But weaker souls who hardly won their heaven,
May better hope to raise their fellows there.

Now when the world is racked to its foundation,
The voices of the dead are in your ears,
Into your hands they dedicate this nation,
To mould and strengthen in the coming years :

That not in vain these young lives may be taken,
Nor vain be all the tragedy of war,
But in your charge their England may awaken,
Peaceful, and pure, and excellent once more.

THE OLD HOUSE-MASTER

'THE blood ran red in these young brains and limbs,

Clear-eyed and laughing, lovers of the day,
They played their games, and worked, and sang
their hymns,

Finished their course, and passed upon their way.
Now they have died, and nought remains of all

That spring of life in which they had their part,
But names half-carved, and portraits on the wall,
And memories of laughter in the heart.'

So muses he upon his boyish dead,

Through the dumb night, while others in their
prime,

His youthful England, slumber overhead ;

Then shuts the book upon his knee unread,

And lights his candle for the thousandth time,
And climbs alone his creaky way to bed.

DIRGE FOR DEAD WARRIORS

Ye that have perished ere the morning broke,
Ye whom death conquered when the noon was
clear,

And ye who left us in the battle smoke
Through the long twilights of the latter year,
When home was far, and death and sorrow near,
When hope burnt feebly in a mist of pain,
Glory ye sought, which casteth out all fear—
Take comfort, for ye have not lived in vain.

And ye who pass upon the sea in ships,
Whose businesses upon great waters lie,
Who met the death unseen with smiling lips
And gave your lives lest other men should die,
Lo! through the steep confusion of the sky,
Above the surge and thunder of the main,
A voice thrills downward like a battle-cry,
'Take comfort, for ye have not lived in vain.'

No place was ours among the rank and file
Of war; for us no sudden trumpets pealed;
But ours to gather and to mourn awhile
The sad and splendid leavings of the field.

To you—to you 'twas given to bear the shield,
To guard and cherish it without a stain—
And when, in God's good time, these wounds are
healed,
Take comfort, for ye have not lived in vain.

Ah ! valiant souls, whose marching days are o'er,
Who went to battle like a banquet spread,
Who having walked amid the ways of war,
Now tread the echoing pathways of the dead,
Others have passed where now your spirits tread,
Who perished that the world might live again,
To them and you alike it shall be said,
' Take comfort, for ye have not lived in vain.'

Nobles, and captains, and ye princely ghosts,
Shadows of shades and monarchies inane,
When ye shall answer to the Lord of Hosts,
Take comfort, for ye have not lived in vain.

MISSING : UNOFFICIALLY REPORTED KILLED

Was it in the noonday that you left us,
When the ranks were wrapped in smoke ?
Or did you pass unnoticed on the midnight,
Ere the chiller morning broke ?

Did the lust and heat of battle find you ready,
Shoulders braced and heart aflame ?
Or did death steal by and take you unexpected,
When the final summons came ?

Not amidst the companies and clamour
Of this horror men call War,
Where man, the godlike, tramples down his fellows
To the dust they were before ;

But on some still November morning
When the frost was in the air,
Noiselessly your strong soul took its passing,
And I, your friend, not there—not there !

Silently the dead leaves swing and settle
In their appointed place ;
The season of the singing birds is over,
The winter sets apace.

Somewhere in the ruin of the autumn,
When the hosts of war are sped,
They will find you, 'midst the quiet wondering
faces
Of the unnumbered dead.

THE LIVING DEAD

DEAD men are blind, and cannot know
The common beauties of the earth ;
They cannot watch the wild-flower blow,
They do not see the day-star's birth.

Dead men are deaf. The lips that pray,
The priest and the philosopher,
The myriad flutes of Arcady
Trouble them not, they cannot stir.

Dead men are dumb. The noisy stream
May roar and clamour overhead ;
The lover's song, the poet's dream,
To them are nothing, being dead.

The dust of death is on their eyes,
The clay of death is in their ears,
And on their pallid lips there lies
The silence of the iron years.

Yet, England, weep not overlong,
But praise thou, with thy latest breath,
These men who in their lives were strong,
But prove them stronger still in death.

Dead they may be, but never dumb ;
Deaf—but what music wakes their ears,
The echoes of an age to come,
The deep-toned chanting of the spheres.

Their voices, trumpet-calls to war,
Hearten each warrior on his way,
And in their eyes foreshadowed far
The radiance of a larger day.

THE DEAD LOVER

WERE you quick and active once—you that lie so
still ?

Did your brain run nimbly once, your lungs expand
and fill ?

Were problems worth the trying, was living worth
the dying ?

Did the flying moment pay you for the labour up
the hill ?

Ah, you stay so silent now ! you could tell me why
Woods are green in April now, and men are made
to die.

Do you feel the spring, I wonder, through the turf
you 're sleeping under,

Though the thunder and the sunshine cannot reach
you where you lie ?

The good rain trickles down to you and laps your
limbs about,

The young grass has its roots in you, your bone
and members sprout.

Ah, poor untimely lover, in new fashion you 'll
discover

That clover still is fragrant, and the primroses
are out.

Though the old uneasy feeling cannot wake you
sleeping there,
Nor the soft spring breezes dally with your crisp
delightful hair,
Yet the flowers are round you clinging, and the dust
about you springing,
And your singing spirit wanders like an essence on
the air.

LAMENT FOR A YOUNG SOLDIER

LIGHT they were once, the spirits that are lagging
now,
Clouded the eyes that looked so clear and gay,
Nimble the feet that fall so faint and flagging
now,
Heavy the heart since Michael went away.

Ah, you were strong who trod the earth so happily,
Stronger and cleaner than your own straight
sword;
And great you were, though life brought nothing
great to you,
Save at the last this crowning great reward.

Surely of all that the gods have to give to us
Nought that was pleasant had they left to give;
Nothing you knew of sordidness or sorrow,
Nothing but laughter and the wish to live.

Far from this England that was ever dear to you,
Bright now with blossoms and the bloom of May,
You, who so loved her sunlight and her starlight,
Watch for the dawning of a wider day.

Not for you now the chaffinch in the hedgerow,
The long low twilight in the rain-sweet lane,
The great winds blowing from the south across the
downland,
Spring-time, or harvest, or sunset after rain.

Yet though I ne'er shall meet you in the body,
Hourly I find you near me when I pass ;
Lingers your laughter round each well-known
corner,
Rustle your footstep beside me in the grass.

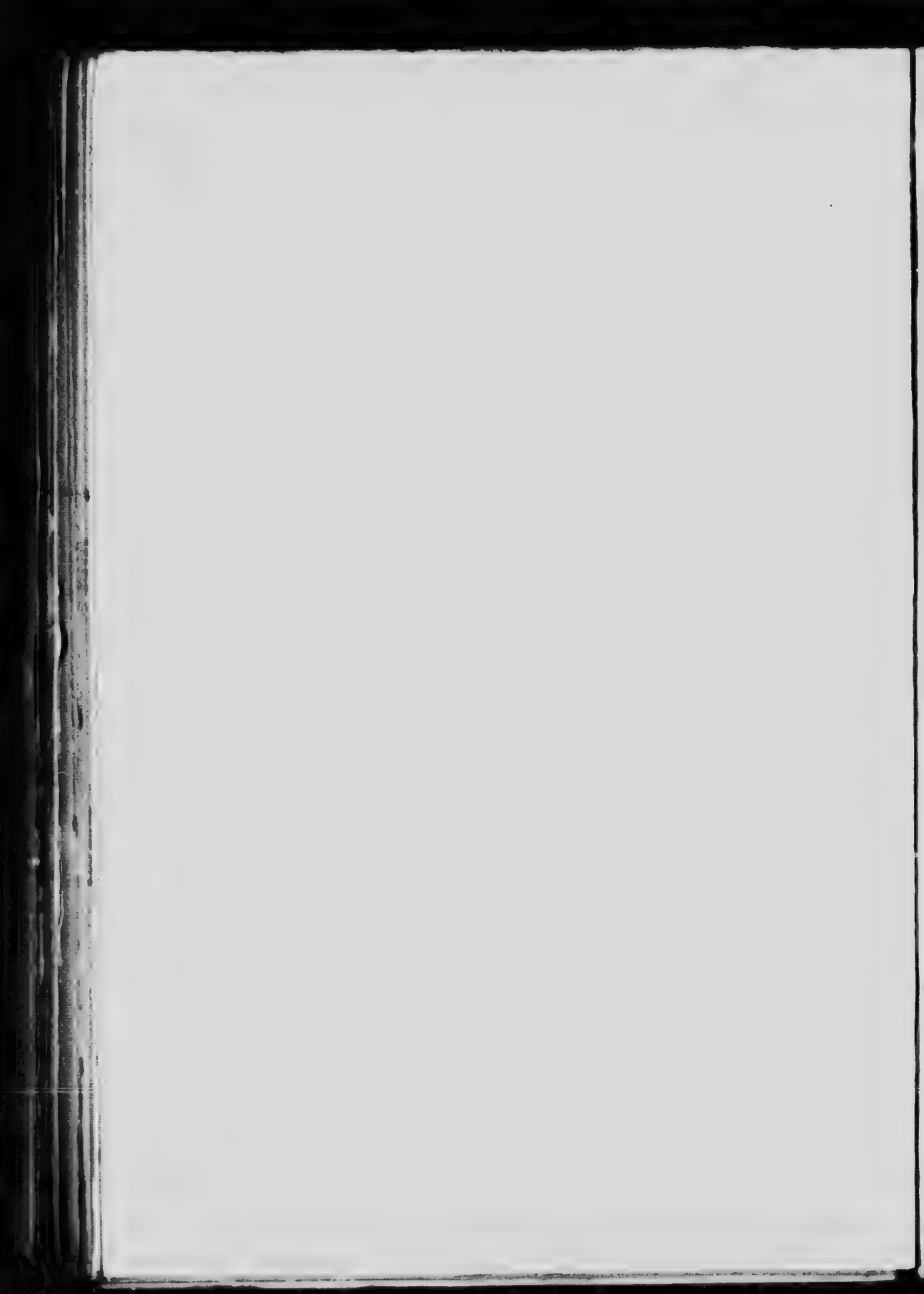
And when the time shall come for me to follow
Over the flood where Charon plies his oar,
Well do I know that I shall find you waiting
First of the phantoms on the Stygian shore ;

Gaily you'll greet me in remembered fashion,
Taking my arm the old familiar way,
And wander down Elysian meads, recalling
Faces and fancies of a bygone day.

So till that time sleep softly, O my brother,
Softly and sound as you slumbered in the past ;
Love, which is stronger and deeper than eternity,
Shall cover, and comfort, and wake you at the
last.

*Light they were once, the spirits that are lagging
now,
Clouded the eyes that looked so clear and gay,
Nimble the feet that fall so faint and flagging now,
Heavy the heart since Michael went away.*

May, 1918.



THE REGIMENT OF THE DEAD

WHEN the moon shows pale above the chimney-tops

And the street gleams white and wide,
When the clock ticks loudly on the mantelpiece,
And the house is dark inside,
Softly, sudden in the silences

When the hours are small and new,
Just below you in the street you can hear the
tramp of feet

That are marching, marching through.

*Horse, foot, officers, and batteries,
With dumb drums beating a tattoo,
The Regiment of the Dead, with its Colonel at its head,
Is marching, marching through.*

It's a regiment that never needs recruiting,

It takes our favourite and best,
Boys and middle-aged and veterans
With ribbons pinned across their breast ;

They wear all sorts of motley uniforms,
Khaki and red and blue,

And you'll see their medals gleam as the Army of
a dream

Goes marching, marching through.

When the shadows grow human and mysterious,
And the trees loom large against the sky,
You can hear them drumming through the country-
side
As they drummed in the days gone by.
'Way! Make way for their companies!
Clear! Stand clear from before!
And give them a salute when the last footfall is
mute
And the street is still once more.

*Horse, foot, officers, and batteries,
With dumb drums beating a tattoo,
The Regiment of the Dead, with its Colonel at its head,
Is marching, marching through.*

LITTLE SOLDIER

ARE you happy, little soldier, with your sword and
hat and gun,
As you march across the hearth-rug up and
down ?
Do you dream of flags and cheering, and of lances
in the sun ?
Do you hear the bugles playing through the
town ?

Believe me, little soldier, War has grimmer sights
than these,
When the tearing shells are busy overhead,
When the man who never knows it kills a man he
never sees,
And the women mourn in silence for their dead.

The limbs so young and active once are quiet now
and tame,
And empty are the hopes of yesterday ;
I fancy, little soldier, War 's a sorry sort of game,
When the fireworks and the bands have ceased
to play.

Since men are neither good nor wise, such things as
these must be,
And ours it is to see the matter through,
That the world may be a cleaner place in nineteen-
thirty-three
For decent little soldier-men like you.

THE VETERAN

GET me a horse to ride, lad ;
Open the stable-door ;
Buckle a sword to my side, lad,
And let me away to war.
My fighting time is past its prime,
My hair is touched with snow,
But my limbs are light and my heart is right,
What more can a youngster show ?

Nine years with the Meynell Hunt, lad,
And seasons twelve with the Quorn !
But there 's bigger game at the front, lad,
Than ever fox was born !
I 've followed straight o'er ditch and gate
Wherever the field was set,
But I 'm off, my son, for the fastest run,
And the finest finish yet.

I 'm sick of the folk that talk, lad,
I 'm sick of the folk that write,
For while a fellow can walk, lad,
A fellow can surely fight.

I 'd sooner feel the German steel
And die where the cannons roll,
Than shiver alone by a chill hearth-stone
With the iron in my soul.

TROY

HERE lay the ships. Upon this strand
The ten-year battle was begun,
Here great Achilles took his stand
And Priam pleaded for his son.
The ships have rotted and decayed,
The warriors are dust and mould,
And Troy the shadow of a shade ;
For nigh three thousand years have rolled
Since Hector fought and Homer sung,
When Greece and all the world was young.

A nobler Navy breasts the waves,
Across the plain fresh armies go,
Once more above those quiet graves
From dusk to dawn the watch-fires glow.
Perchance some bugle faintly blown,
Some distant echo of the fight,
May bring them, sleeping there alone,
The memory of another night
When, black beneath the Southern Cross,
The lean ships came from Tenedos.

And, if the gods are good and just,
The march of feet will rouse the dead,
Some dust of all that gallant dust
Will rise and eddy overhead,
Mingle awhile with other ghosts
To wage their battles o'er again,
And mark the trampling of our hosts
Across their old familiar plain,
Then when the fight is past and spent
Sink into silence, well content.

April, 1915.

SHIPS, SEAS, AND MEN

A Song of Ships. Of wheeling gulls
Of sun, and cloud, and windy skies
Above the endless ocean ways.
Ye ships of war, those lean black hulls
Whose smoke on our horizon lies,
Guardians of peace, to you I raise,
Where'er your stormy ensign dips,
This song of ships.

A Song of Seas. Seas infinite
As Time itself, and salt as tears
Of those who mourn an Empire's pride.
The legend of our race is writ
In water ; our unstable years
Shift with the shifting of the tide.
Mark ye, whose hopes are based on these,
This Song of Seas.

A Song of Men. Whose lives are sand
Blown for an instant into view.
Your little days, so swiftly done,
Ye offer freely for your land :

Ye perish, but the souls of you
Rise up like incense in the sun.
Accept this dedication then,
 This Song of Men.

KRUPP

THESE guns are works of art you sell,
So smooth and bright, so round and hard,
And can they really throw a shell
A dozen miles, nor swerve a yard ?
A tug upon this lanyard—so—
And then, a dozen miles away,
Some harmless soul you do not know,
Some startled spirit, leaves the day.

Yes, curious wages you must give,
For 'tis a curious trade you ply,
This earning of the means to live
By causing other men to die.
Why, if a man for half a year
Should slay while he had strength to slay,
His killings would not compass near
What these could work in half a day !

Consider, then ! A price we fix :
For every gun nine hundred rounds,
And every round will cost you six,
And every gun a thousand pounds.
Each shot kills eight. A simple task
For him to reckon out who may.
But, what the price of souls, you ask ?
What matter ! Souls are cheap to-day.

Your forges roar, your workshops hum,
The air is thick with dust and oil,
And all day long the orders come,
And all day long your myriads toil.
Such times to you are life and breath,
Your men are drawing double pay,
For war, which brings to others death,
Brings you a thousand pounds a day.

Your gold is wrought of grief and fears,
Your silver agony and pain,
Each note is drenched with blood and tears,
And on each coin the brand of Cain.
The ruined homestead black with smoke,
The widowed wives, the orphans—yea,
The lives of simple country folk,
Make up your thousand pounds a day.

There was a man of old who sought
To sell another for a price,
For thirty pieces he was bought
And in the Potter's Field he lies.
Ah! think while yet your life is whole,
While yet you have the heart to pray,
What you shall say to each sad soul
That fronts you on the Judgment Day.

Not all Golconda's jewelled stores,
Nor Eldorado's fabled land,
Would make me change my lot with yours,
Or stand where you some time must stand.
For peace of mind is best, nor might
The wealth of all the world outweigh
Such dreams as come to you by night,
Such thoughts as trouble you by day.

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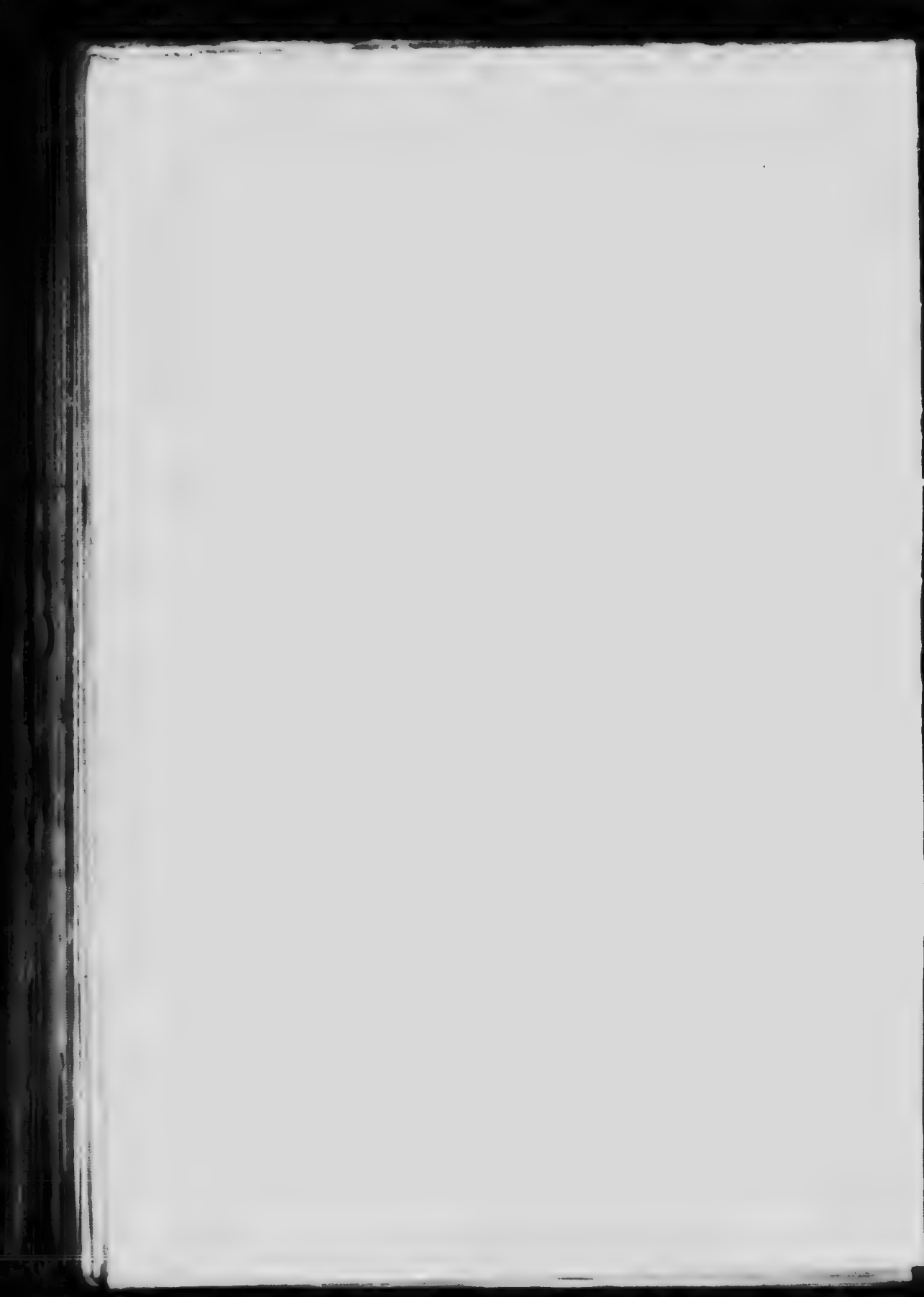
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NIETZSCHE

I DREAMT that there was merriment in hell,
And as each meagre new-departed sprite
Came hesitating forward to the light
To warm itself, there followed straight a yell
Of devils'-mirth, for trade was doing well.
And when in Flanders fiercer grew the fight,
So thicker thronged the phantoms through the
night,
Louder that gusty laughter rose and fell.

Lastly they turned to one apart, who furled
A cloak about his face. 'Oh! make reply
Thou, who hast said this Christ corrupts the world,
And men no longer have the will to die.
These thousands perished for a treaty. What
Hast thou to say?' But Nietzsche answered not.



DESIDERATA

SOME songs I have which might be worth the
making,

Some dreams to fashion ere the journey's end,
Some flowers I know fragrant and fair for taking,
Some books to read, some fireside hours to spend.

Some work to finish, still in its beginnings,
Some friends to meet, some places still to see,
Some games to play, and many a sunlit innings
Still to be hoped for in the years to be.

There's a long avenue of elms out yonder,
Golden and splendid in an English sun,
And sunken lanes down which I fain would wander
In Sussex when the hawthorn has begun.

Yet should the end come suddenly upon me
And take these things untimely from my ken,
You, O my brothers, who have met and known me,
I would not wish you to mistake me then.

Deem me as one who loved, and, greatly loving,
Found the world full of melody and mirth,
And to the end, firm-fixed past all removing,
Cherished the beauty and the joy of earth.

And it may be that he who, much mistaken,
Cried for the future and forgot the past,
In some surprising daybreak shall awaken
To find his dreams fulfilled for him at last.

So when the spring comes in, serene and tender,
Still shall he mark it from those distant realms,
And through broad places, full of sun and splendour,
Saunter again beneath the Sussex elms.

There shall he know nor sorrowing nor pity,
But the old tunes and voices lost so long,
Where, citizens of an abiding city,
Imperfect singers find the perfect song.

PASTORAL

SAY, did you ever stand beside
And watch the waters coolly glide
And sing their little happy tune
Beneath an English April moon,
When the young heavens are fresh and new,
Dusted with stars and misty-blue,
When all the world seems out-of-date,
Mystical, indeterminate ?

Oh, if the hours of light and sun
Be too the hours of great deeds done,
Who would not dream his dreams amiss
Must seek them under moons like this,
When thoughts and half-forgotten joys
Sing with a faint and fleeting noise
An ancient and delightful strain
Within the chambers of the brain.

The day is dead, so let it lie,
Say we who watched it live and die,
And all its human hopes and fears
Fare forth to join the eternal years.

Here there is neither time, nor strife,
Nor love, nor hate, nor death, nor life,
Nor waking time, nor time to weep,
But a blue world lost in a blue sleep.

None ever knew this England well
Who has not known the wood-smoke smell,
Or seen the elm-trees' sombre height
Grow solemnly against the night,
With one star tangled in their leaves,
Looming above the cottage eaves.
These he has known who England knows
And men have died for these and those.

MIDHURST, *April*, 1916.

CUMBERLAND

IN Cumberland, in Cumberland the hills stand up
together,

And the little lonely rivers go talking to the sea,
And the mists creep down at twilight when the
hills are dark and solemn,

And the stars shine out above them as quiet as
can be ;

There 's sheep in plenty yonder, you can hear them
on the moorland,

With the whaup and plover calling where the
shadows come and go ;

The wind that blows in Cumberland is fresher than
all others,

And the dawns across the dales rise up most
wonderful and slow.

The folk that live in Cumberland are decent folk
and sober,

You may meet them of a Sunday in their broad-
cloth two and two,

The ale is honest drinking and the bread is brown
and crusty,

And the dogs you see beside the road know near
as much as you.

Oh ! the soft sweet fall of morning and the peat
smoke in the evening !

Oh ! the slanting summer sunshine and the
sorrow of the rain !

And the low grey dykes come running, and the
roads wind up and over,

Where the mist and clouds are lying and the
silences remain.

In Cumberland, in England, the hills are great and
lonely,

Lonelier than ever since her lads have marched
away ;

And the sheep are there untended, and the plover
still are calling,

Like the noise of waters breaking at the dawning
of the day.

Strike, lad, strike ! for the mountains that have
bred you,

Climb, lad, climb ! though the way be long and
steep,

You 've travelled worse in Cumberland—and if the
end comes sudden,

Then Cumberland 's the country where 'tis
easiest to sleep.

WINCHESTER REVISITED

Round the old walls the ivy still is clinging,
Between bare trees the grey tower climbs the sky,
And in the west some lonely bird is singing
A song of memories and days gone by.

The mists rise, and the meads are moon-enchanted,
Even as I have seen them years ago,
Yet different, for now the place is haunted,
Splendidly peopled by the men I know.

Raise but your eyes, and see their forms appearing,
Sauntering palely o'er the moonlit green ;
Halt but a pace to catch their phantom cheering
Carried remotely down the years between.

Strong they were once, and lovable, and cleanly,
Battling to win, yet gallant in defeat ;
Not unremembered did they live, nor meanly ;
Draining the cup of Youth, they found it sweet.

They loved the School and all that lay around them,
Laughter, and friendships, and the light of day ;
Greatly they lived, and greatly Death has found
them ;
Smiling, they fare before us down the way.

They sleep not in the field of France or Flanders,
A kindlier earth their spirit craves instead,
And here, even here, the viewless legion wanders,
And Wykeham's living mingle with his dead.

So ye, whose days of spring are yet unended,
Travel the paths they trod for you before,
That you, like them, may catch the Vision Splendid,
And pass with banners to the farther shore.

And, ere you go, in memory of the perished,
Here by their walls, their old familiar trees,
Strive to be faithful to the School they cherished,
Thank God for England, Winchester, and these.

WINCHESTER,
December, 1917.

DILETTANTE

I HAVE loved the world, the light and air of it,
The creatures over it, both great and small,
The ups and downs, the work and wear of it,
The cark and care of it, I loved them all.
What things were good, what things were beautiful,
What things were strenuous, beyond my skill,
Though darkly seen, I sought them dutiful,
Though failing often, yet I follow still.

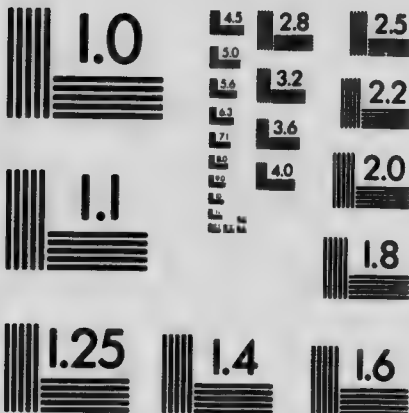
I have watched spring-time coming tenderly,
Have seen heroic autumn flare and die,
Have walked the twilight lanes, while, slenderly,
The new moon blossomed in a waning sky.
I have known friendships and believed in them
(God send me many ere my day be done !);
I have read books—rejoiced and grieved in them,
I have loved music and the setting sun.

But most of all is England dear to me,
Her hawthorn hedges and her meadows wide,
Her shadowed orchards—ah, how near to me,
Each detail of her quiet country-side ;



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Yes, every early primrose, each anemone,
Plucks at my inmost thoughts as ne'er before,
Therefore in this her trial, her Gethsemane,
Fair do I greet her as I ride to war.

EVENING AND THE HILLS

Lo ! the mountains.
Grandly they glow and face the dying sun,
Immense and calm ; and little shadows, one by
 one,
Fill all their hollows with mystery, and grow
 Imperceptibly across the face of the hills,
As the shadows creep and gather slow
Round the mouth and eyes of a stricken man
 Who muses on his ills
And mourns the stern world's melancholy plan.

These are for ever.
Yea, though in labour one should rise and rise
And front the day with unbecclouded eyes,
Then in a season pass again to rest ;
 Though æons hence our children should beget
Fresh perishable folk, and kingdoms still un-
 guessed
Should live and fade to nothingness again,
 Still suns would set,
And hills, the everlasting hills, remain.

O soulless strength !
Tremendous void, profundity inane !
Why should you ape eternity in vain !
One pulsing moment of our momentary lives,
One instant when the blood runs hot and swift,
A heart that sickens and a mind that strives
Are mightier far than all your mightiness.
These souls that drift
Are worth the sum of such eternities.

So now, my friend,
Let us go down together from the height
Soberly, as is fit for those whose sight
Rested but now on God's immensities,
But yet remembering we are strangely wrought
With something of the mountain silences
And something of the labour of the flat ;
Our lives are nought,
Sudden and evanescent as a gnat
That sings across a beam and passes on.
Yet does our little period comprise

Laughter, and love, and friendship, that shall
last
When the slow sunsets and the hills are gone,
And the last lonely wind that roars above us dies,
And all eternities are overpast.

INVERNESS-SHIRE,
September, 1916.

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